

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (D-MD) was honored today by The Arc of the United States, the nation's largest volunteer-based organization devoted solely to issues concerning people with mental retardation and related developmental disabilities and their families. Hoyer was named as this year's recipient of their Chafee Leadership in Public Policy Award for his longstanding advocacy in pursuing public policies that help people with mental retardation and related developmental disabilities live fuller lives in their communities. The award, named for the late Sen. John Chafee of Rhode Island and intended to honor his work on behalf of people with mental retardation, is presented annually at their Governmental Affairs/Policy Seminar.

At the award ceremony, Congressman Hoyer also addressed the annual conference held jointly by 5 disability groups, The Arc of the United States, United Cerebral Palsy (UCP), Association of University Centers on Disability (AUCD), AAMR (American Association on Mental Retardation), NACDD (National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities) and discussed his efforts to strengthen Medicaid and Social Security, two key entitlement programs that sustain people with disabilities, and his concerns with cuts to important programs in the President's proposed budget for fiscal year 2006 that serve people with disabilities. He also expressed his concern with decisions made by the Supreme Court and the lower federal courts which are slowly chipping away at the protections intended to be provided by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), narrowing the scope of the law's protections, and undermining Congressional intent.

"I am very concerned that in his fiscal year 2006 budget request, President Bush asks people with disabilities to pay for the reckless fiscal policies of this Administration by slashing or eliminating funds to housing, job training and education programs that help ensure that people with disabilities are given the ability to be fully integrated into society," **said Congressman Hoyer**

Congressman Hoyer was the principal House sponsor of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, a landmark piece of civil rights legislation and the world's first comprehensive declaration of equality for people with disabilities.

"When we passed the ADA, we knew that there would be a great deal of work to be done in order to topple decades of prejudice and attitudes. However, today we face new and great challenges: the dismantling of critical entitlement programs, the starving of important discretionary programs, and the narrowing of the scope of the ADA. We have our work cut out for us. Congress and the Administration must hear your voices and remember that people with disabilities should not be dismissed. I am pleased to join you in the fight," **Hoyer added.**

Lorraine Sheehan, immediate Past President of the Arc of the United States and a resident of Maryland said, “for my son John, a person with significant disabilities, and the millions of families like mine in our country who face disability in our family, these are extraordinarily dangerous times. We praise Congressman Hoyer for his tremendous work on behalf of people with disabilities and wish him well as he works with us to derail these drastic public policy changes that this Administration is pursuing.”

Congressman Hoyer joins past award winners including Bill Roth, Jim Jeffords, Ted Kennedy, Tom Harkin, Charles Grassley, Rick Lazio, Rodney Frelinghuysen, and Robert Matsui.

More information on the annual Governmental Affairs/Public Policy Seminar or on housing issues for people with mental retardation and related developmental disabilities can be found on The Arc’s web site at www.thearc.org.